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COTTON MATHER'S ELECTION INTO THE ROYAL SOCIETY

BY
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COTTON MATHER'S ELECTION INTO THE ROYAL SOCIETY

WHEN a Boston preacher who died almost two hundred years ago can still divide our local republic of letters into hostile camps at a moment's notice, the presumption is that he amounted to something. Such a man is Cotton Mather. The burning questions that fired his contemporaries might be supposed to be extinguished by this time; but whoever pokes among the ashes will soon discover the *semina ignis*, quite ready to flare up. For my own part, I am neither pro-Mather nor anti-Mather, and my purpose in resuscitating the debate about the Doctor's title of F. R. S., which began in his own day, is to administer an irenicon.¹ To this end, I shall produce two fresh pieces of evidence which seem to have eluded investigation. They are positive, direct, trustworthy, indubitable. They prove conclusively that Cotton Mather was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, and they fix the day, and almost the hour, of the event. Before reciting them, however, I must review the whole case.

In November, 1712, Cotton Mather composed a series of thirteen letters on the Natural History of New England and kindred topics. Seven of them were addressed to John Woodward, M. D., F. R. S., Professor of Physic at Gresham College, and six to Richard Waller, Esq., Secretary of the Royal Society. All were intended as communications to that learned body.¹

Excerpts from these letters were printed in 1714 in No. 339 of the Philosophical Transactions, — the number designated as "for the Months of April, May and June."² The excerpts were, of course,

¹ The first letter of the series is dated November 17, 1712; the last, November 29. Our associate, Mr. Frederick Lewis Gay, has copies of these letters and of many others which Cotton Mather addressed to the Royal Society, — of all, in fact, that are preserved in the MS. Letter-Book of the Society. I am deeply grateful to him for lending me these copies and for allowing me to print such extracts as I may desire. I shall cite the transcripts as the "Gay MS."

The original draughts of many of Mather's letters to the Royal Society or its members are in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society. I am obliged to our associate, Mr. Worthington C. Ford, for calling my attention to these manuscripts, which I shall cite as *M. H. S.* and *A. A. S.* respectively. Neither society has draughts of the series of 1712. There appear to be copies of this series in Sloane MS. 3339.

² No. 339 of the Philosophical Transactions has the colophon, "*London.*

of a highly miscellaneous character. They deal with fossil teeth and bones (believed to be the remains of an antediluvian giant),¹ with plants and birds, with antipathies and the force of the imagination, with the American Indians, with rainbows and sundogs, with the strange discovery of a murder by a dream, with the rattlesnake, with earthquakes and thunder, with pits in the rocks at Amoskeag "a little above the hideous Falls" of the Merrimac, with longevity and the multiplication of the human race, and with the mysterious figures engraved on Dighton Rock. It is easy to make fun of these jottings, which, indeed, are commonly held to betray an abnormal credulity. I have no wish to enter the lists in championship of Cotton Mather as a man of science. Still, an error is no less an error when it has come to be a tiresome fashion. Mather may or may not have been exceptionally credulous. Such a charge, at all events, gets no support from these *Curiosa* and others like them. For they are precisely the kind of thing that naturalists were noting and publishing at that time, in England and on the Continent, and most of them were really worth noting. It is a pity that we do not study the history of science a little, before we pitch upon an individual as a scapegoat for his age. If we would only look abroad oftener, we might find the intellectual life of Massachusetts in Mather's period less barren, less glacial, than we do. The significant thing is, not that Mather thought the venom of a rattlesnake would decompose the steel edge of a broadaxe, but that his *Curiosa* were not out of place in the Philosophical Transactions, and would not have been out of place in the Acta Eruditorum of Leipzig or the Ephemerides of the Leopoldina. Even the story of the murder revealed in a dream was respectfully treated by the English savants. "The Relation" — such is the editor's comment — "seems to be well attested,"² and

Printed for W. INNYS, at the *Princes'-Arms* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. 1714." It was afterwards assembled with other numbers to make up "Vol. XXIX. For the Years 1714, 1715, 1716," which was issued as a whole in 1717. The excerpts are on pp. 62-71. They bear the title, "*An Extract of several Letters from Cotton Mather, D. D. to John Woodward, M. D. and Richard Waller, Esq; S. R. Secr.*" The Letter-Book of the Royal Society (M. 2. 34) contains this article (as printed in the Transactions) in MS., prepared for the press (Gay MS., fols. 151-168).

¹ See Lord Cornbury's letter, quoted by C. R. Weld, *History of the Royal Society*, i. 421 (cf. Sloane MS. 4064, fols. 86, 93).

² Philosophical Transactions, xxix. 67.

the editor was no less a personage than the great astronomer Halley. In fact, it is just such an incident as psychologists now register with anxious care, and study with trembling hope. Ralph Thoresby, the historian of Leeds, believed devoutly in apparitions and in witchcraft, and he was an F. R. S. and voted for Cotton Mather — but I must not anticipate.

It is sometimes assumed that Mather sent these scientific papers to the Royal Society "solely and merely of his own spontaneous motion." This is a mistake. The first letter of the series settles the matter. It is addressed to Dr. John Woodward, and begins:

Sr,

Your excellent *Essay towards the Natural History of the Earth*, has obliged and even commanded, y^e true Friends of *Religion*, and *Philosophy*, to serve you with as many Communications as they can, that may be subservient unto your noble Intention. But the *Letters* wherewith you have honoured me, have laid *me* under your more particular commands, to supply you with such *subterraneous curiosities*, as may have been in these parts of *America* mett withal. I do with much Alacrity apply myself immediately to obey your Commands, in one Remarkable Instance, wherein I apprehend myself best able to do it." ¹

Woodward was particularly interested in palæontology, and was always eager for fossils ² or for information about them. It was

¹ Mather to Woodward, Nov. 17, 1712, Gay MS., fol. 1 (from Royal Society Letter-Book M. 2. 21).

² In July, 1716, Mather thanks Dr. Woodward for a "most acceptable present" (namely, "your *Defence of your Natural History of the Earth*") and remarks: "I am overwhelmed with some Confusion, that I have not all this time yeelded a due Obedience to y^e Commands you laid upon me, to make a Collection of o^f Fossils. . . . But I am forming y^e best Projection I can, in an Infant Countrey, entirely destitute of Philosophers, to have this, and other Intentions answered" (M. H. S.). On July 24, 1716, he sends Woodward, with further apologies, a piece of limestone from Sir William Phips's famous treasure ship (M. H. S.). On October 15, 1716, Mather sends to John Winthrop (H. C. 1700) "a Book of my honour'd D^r Woodward's," adding: "But how oblig'd would both he and I be, if Your Inquisitive Ingenuity employing the Liesure of a Gentleman of Erudition (which you are) for that purpose, would make as full a Collection as may be of the Fossils; (the Names written on each little Bundle:) to be in *Your Name*, transmitted unto him" (4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 419). Winthrop replies on November 5, 1716: "I shall doe my indeavo^r to answer both yo^r^m & D^r Woodward's requests in making a collection of y^e fossils of o^f country for Gresham Colledge . . . and as to y^e utensills of y^e Pagans, perhaps I may

natural that he should apply to the most learned man in New England for such information in the American field, and it was equally natural that he should suggest (as he appears to have done) that he should like to lay before the Royal Society the communications that Mather might favor him with.

How cordially the Royal Society welcomed Cotton Mather's correspondence, may be seen in the following extract from their M^S. Journal, July 23, 1713:

A letter drawn up by Mr. Waller for Mr. Cotton Mather at Boston in New England was read ; giving an account of the receipt of his letter and his manuscript, containing his several observations on Natural subjects, with an invitation to a future correspondence; which was ordered to be sent.

Mr. Waller proposed the same gentleman as a candidate, according to his desire mentioned in his said letter; which was referred to the next Council.¹

The statement that Waller nominated Mather "according to his desire mentioned in his letter" must not be taken (as it usually is²) to indicate that Mather in effect nominated himself. It indicates merely that Waller had ascertained what it was incumbent upon him

gratifye y^e doctors curiosity in some of their originall instruments, ancient notions & traditions, &c., which I have lately learn't & received among them" (6 Collections, v. 332-333). On July 25, 1717, Mather writes to Woodward that Winthrop has promised his assistance, "and as a Specimen of more to follow, he enables me now . . . to transmit unto you a Box, which contains between Twenty and Thirty of such Things as you have asked for" (M. H. S.). On January 13, 1720, Winthrop sent Mather "a Small Box directed to Dr Woodward;" but Mather did not receive the accompanying letter until May 2, and the box had not come to hand by May 9 (4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 438). On April 3, 1721, Woodward writes to Winthrop, thanking him for shells, and asking for fossils and Indian bones and utensils, and to Mather begging him to be "more inquisitive" in seeking fossils (1 Massachusetts Historical Proceedings, xiii. 110-111). In the same month, Winthrop writes to Mather: "I am making an other sett of rarities and curiositys for the Royall Society, w^{ch} I am thinking to present wth my owne hands" (6 Collections, v. 399 note).

¹ N. Darnell Davis, Was Cotton Mather a Fellow of the Royal Society? (The Nation, New York, February 18, 1892, liv. 128; New England Historical and Genealogical Register, xlii. 116.)

² By Dr. Slafter, for example, whose account of the matter runs thus: — "Dr. Cotton Mather, it seems, as early as 1713, sent a communication to the society, containing observations on 'Natural Subjects,' with a desire clearly expressed that he might be made a member" (John Checkley, Prince Society, 1897, i. 41).

to learn before nominating *anybody* — namely, the willingness of the person in question. For the Statutes of the Royal Society expressly provided that one who propounds a person for election into the fellowship “shall satisfy the company, that he hath informed [him of certain obligations], and that hereupon it is the desire of the said person to be of the Society.”¹

The next meeting of the Council took place only four days later, on July 27, 1713, and their Minutes record, on that date, that “Mr. Cotton Mather was proposed, balloted for, and approved to be a Member of the Society.”²

Secretary Waller's official letter, acknowledging the receipt of Mather's manuscript and inviting him to continue his correspondence, was received by Mather on October 12, 1713. This was the missive that had been approved by the Society on July 23. Along with it, we must believe, came a private letter from Waller, informing him of the action of the Council and assuring him of a speedy election by the Society as a whole, — for Waller doubtless felt sure that the favorable action of the Council had made the result a foregone conclusion. These two letters are referred to as follows in Mather's Diary under that date:

12d. Sm. This Day, in Ships arriving from London, I receive Letters from the Secretary of the Royal Society, who tells me, That my *Curiosa Americana* being Readd before that Society, they were greatly Satisfied therewith, and ordered the Thanks of the Society to be returned unto me; They also Signified their Desire and purpose to Admitt me as a Member of their Body. And, he assures me, that at their first lawful Meeting for such purposes, I shall be made A FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY.³

Mather sent Waller a witty and graceful reply, which I am permitted to print, for the first time, from the original draught in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society.⁴

¹ Chapter vi, sect. 2 (Diplomata et Statuta Regalis Societatis, 1752, pp. 82-83). The Statute was “made in 1663.” It is to be inferred that Woodward, in requesting Mather for contributions, asked him if he should like to be proposed for membership, and that Mather, in a personal letter (not known to be extant), enclosing the series of thirteen formal letters, replied with a grateful affirmative. At all events, there is no evidence, and no probability, that Mather nominated himself. ² Davis, Register, as above, xlv. 117.

³ As quoted by Wendell, Cotton Mather, p. 244.

⁴ The draught is undated, but, in the manuscript volume which contains it,

[Separate Letter.]¹

S^r

An Honour too great for me to have hoped for, the Letters wherewth you have lately favoured me, have allow'd me some hope of my arriving to. ²The Academy of y^e *Nascosti*, at *Milain*; that of y^e *Innominati*, in *Parma*; and that of y^e *Incogniti*, in *Venice*, would by their Titles, have been more fitt for so obscure a person, than a room among your honourable *Virtuosi*.²

I have nothing to render me worthy of a Relation to so Illustrious a Society, as that whereto you have done me the Honour of proposing my Admission as a Member, except it be my vast Veneration for the Persons that compose it, and my firm Resolution, to have annually as long as I may live, contributed unto its Treasures, by my best (tho' mean) Communications, altho' I should never have been in this way obliged unto it.

³ And now you give me a Prospect of reaching to such a Dignity, there will be some Addition to my Assiduities, as well as my Capacities, that if I be not one of the *Ardenti*, which they tell me, is a Title worn by one of y^e Academies at *Naples*, yett I will not be one of y^e *Otiosi*; w^{ch}, they say, is a Title worn by another of y^m.

I first render my most humble & hearty Thanks unto you, for doing y^e Part of a Patron on my behalf, in the Reco^mendation you have been pleased to give me: And I assure myself, that an affayr, which will so much strengthen my Opportunities to render myself a Master of what may be found useful & proper to be transmitted from these parts of y^e World, under such a Management as yours, cannot miss of being brought unto Perfection.

I must further pray you to be my Instructor, (for, S^r, you must imagine that you have now a sort of a tame Indian under your Tuition,) what the Rules of my Relation will oblige me to observe, in y^e point of

it follows immediately after the draught of another letter to Waller, entitled by Mather "A Woollen Snow" and intended as a communication to the Society. This letter about the strange fall of wool in a snowstorm, bears date "Dec. 1. 1713," and the private letter of thanks to Waller (which I am reproducing) is headed, in Mather's hand, "[Separate Letter.]" In printing the letter, I take no notice of cancelled words.

¹ The heading (including the brackets) is in Mather's hand.

² The passage beginning with "The Academy" and ending with "*Virtuosi*" is in the margin, and the place where it was to be inserted is indicated by two carets in the text.

³ This paragraph is written in the margin, and the place where it was to be inserted is indicated by three carets in the body of the letter.

those little pecuniary Expences, wth which I am to consider y^e Treasurer of the Society.

Your Instruction, which my Ig[norance] ¹ at so long a Distance from you, rende[rs necessary] for me, will in this, & in ever[y thing] else be complied withal, by, S^r,

Your most obliged Fr[ie]nd] ²

The next document in the case is a letter from Secretary Waller to Cotton Mather. It is not preserved, so far as I know, but we have Samuel Mather's account of it, with an all-important extract:

'Twas in the Year 1714. he received a Letter from the Secretary of the *Royal Society*, [RICHARD WALLER, Esq;] ³ dated *Decemb. 4. 1713.* in which are these Words; *As for your being chosen a Member of the Royal Society, that has been done both by the Council and Body of the Society; only the Ceremony of an Admission is wanting; which, you being beyond Sea, cannot be performed.*⁴

When did Cotton Mather receive this momentous letter from Mr. Secretary Waller? The question can be answered with exactness enough for the purposes of our investigation. *The letter certainly reached him before July 2, 1714, and in all probability before March 30.*⁵ The importance of thus approximating the date will appear presently.

¹ The lower right-hand corner of the leaf is torn off. The words and letters in brackets are conjectural.

² No signature.

³ The brackets are Samuel Mather's.

⁴ Samuel Mather, *Life of Cotton Mather, 1729*, p. 77. Whether Samuel Mather is quoting from the original or from his father's Diary we cannot tell, for the Diary of 1714 is extant only for January and part of February.

⁵ On March 30, 1714, Mather asks John Winthrop (H. C. 1700) for a description of the Connecticut moose, since he is "shortly writing for London, unto, you know who" (4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 417). *You know who* is doubtless Waller, for a letter from Mather to him (dated June 21, 1714) consists entirely of notes on the moose. It begins with an expression of satisfaction at learning of Waller's good health, "which," writes Mather, "has been demonstrated in your particular Enquiries, after the MOOSE in our Country" (Royal Society Letter-Book, M. 2. 35; Gay MS., fol. 169). These inquiries were, in all likelihood, contained in Waller's letter of December 4, 1713, which must therefore have come into Mather's hands before the latter wrote to Winthrop on March 30, 1714.

On July 2, 1714, Mather writes again to Winthrop, remarking: — "I enclose a large Letter from one of the Secretaries of the Royal Society; which you will

To understand Waller's letter, we must have recourse to the Statutes of the Society ("made in 1663" and in force during the whole period that concerns us in this inquiry), as well as to its Second Charter (also of 1663).¹ The Statutes provide that a candidate for fellowship shall be voted on (by ballot) at some meeting subsequent to that at which he is nominated,² and the Charter prescribes a two-thirds vote.³ Reference of nominations to the Council was not required, either by Charter or by Statute, but it seems to have been customary, and it certainly took place in the present instance. Further requirements of the Statutes are that "every person elected a Fellow" shall "subscribe the obligation" to do his duty by the Society,⁴ and that he shall go through the ceremony of admission. The sections defining admission are as follows:

V. Every person, elected a Fellow, shall appear for his Admission at some ordinary meeting of the Society, which shall be within four weeks

please to return unto me, by a safe Conveyance" (4 Collections, viii. 419). This large letter was, of course, the letter from Waller, dated December 4, 1713, which Samuel Mather quotes.

Either of the two limits thus fixed (March 30, 1714, or July 2) is near enough for our purpose. The earlier date, however, is much the more probable.

I am tempted to finish the story of the Moose, which is rather curious. Mather's letter to Waller concerning that animal (June 21, 1714), preserved in the Letter-Book of the Royal Society (M. 2. 35), is endorsed: "Mather: read Oct: 28. 1714. Enter'd L. B. 15. 47. Phil. Trans." This memorandum shows that it was read at a meeting of the Society, and indicates that it was to be published in the Philosophical Transactions. This, however, was not done, and in July, 1716, Mather recopied the little essay, and entrusted it (with other communications for the Society) to Samuel Woodward (Secretary of the Province), who was on the point of setting out for London (M. H. S.). Even then the article failed of publication, and it was reserved for Paul Dudley to enrich the Philosophical Transactions with a description of the moose. His account was communicated to the Society by John Chamberlayne, and may be found in No. 368 (for May-August, 1721, xxxi. 165-168), printed in 1722 or 1723. It was supplemented by a paper from Samuel Dale in No. 444 (xxxix. 384-389).

¹ *Diplomata et Statuta Regalis Societatis Londini . . . Jussu Praesidis et Concilii edita*, 1752. The copy in the Harvard College Library was given by Thomas Hollis in June, 1765, and contains a characteristic inscription in his beautiful handwriting: — "Liber Thomae Hollis, Angli, Hospitii Lincolnensis, Regalis et Antiquariorum Societatum Sodalis; libertatis, patriae, praestantisque ejus constitutionis laudatissime anno 1688 recuperatae amatoris studiosissimi."

² Chap. vi., sects. 1, 4 (pp. 82-83).

³ *Diplomata et Statuta*, p. 28.

⁴ Chap. ii (pp. 76-77). There is also a requirement as to fees (chap. iii, pp. 77-79), but this is of no importance in the present inquiry.

after his Election; or within such further time, as shall be granted by the Society or Council, upon cause shewed to either of them. Otherwise his Election shall be void.

VI. The Admission of any Fellow of the Society shall be at some meeting thereof, in manner and form following: The President, taking him by the hand, shall say these words,

*I do by the authority, and in the name of the Royal Society of London for improving natural knowledge, admit you a Fellow thereof.*¹

These rules explain Waller's words in his letter of December 4, 1713, quoted by Samuel Mather: — "Only the Ceremony of an Admission is wanting; which, you being beyond Sea, cannot be performed." This ceremony, we have seen, had to take place within four weeks of a candidate's election (otherwise the election was void); but the time could be extended indefinitely, for cause, either by the Society or by the Council. In Mather's case, such an extension, if not expressly mentioned at the time, must have been taken for granted by everybody concerned; for he could not even learn of his election until the regular limit had expired.

Everything now seemed to be in good order. Mather had been officially notified by the Secretary that he had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in the regular way. Whenever he should go to London, it would be incumbent on him to present himself for formal "admission," to sign the pledge of fidelity, and to receive the right-hand of fellowship. He would then become an F. R. S. in the fullest legal and technical sense of the term. Meanwhile, he felt justified in appending these honorable letters to his name. He did so immediately, on the title-page of *The Glorious Throne*,² a sermon delivered on September 23, 1714, and published that year, and he continued the practice, on fitting occasions, as long as he lived.

We now see the importance of fixing approximately (as we have already done) the date on which Mather received Waller's notice of election.³ And we observe that it makes no difference whether we choose March 30 or July 2, 1714, as the *terminus ad quem*; for The

¹ Chap. vi., sects. 5-6 (p. 83).

² Sibley, No. 262. Mr. George Parker Winship, Mr. Clarence S. Brigham, and Mr. Albert Matthews have helped me to determine the earliest publication in which Mather styled himself F. R. S.

³ See p. 87, above.

Glorious Throne was not published before September 29.¹ Mather did not presume on Waller's assurance (received in 1713)² that he was *going to be elected*: he waited, as was proper, until the Secretary had informed him that the election was an accomplished fact.

It is impossible to see how Mather can be blamed for using the title of F. R. S., even if he had nothing to go on except Waller's letter of December 4, 1713; for it was inconceivable that there should have been any mistake: Waller was not only the Secretary, but he was the person who had nominated Mather. But Waller was by no means his only voucher. He received assurances of a similar tenor from Dr. Woodward. This appears from an important letter, dated May 21, 1723, from Mather to Dr. James Jurin,³ Secretary of the Society, printed by Mr. N. Darnell Davis in 1892.⁴ In this document, to which we shall have occasion to recur, Mather tells of communicating to Waller and Woodward "a great number of American and Philosophical Curiosities" (evidently the *Curiosa*, the thirteen letters written in November, 1712, and excerpted in the Philosophical Transactions in 1714), and adds:

These Gentlemen putt the, as Unexpected as Undeserved Respect upon⁵ me, of proposing me for a Member of the *Royal Society*; and they both Wrote unto me, That I was chosen accordingly both by the Council

¹ The verso of the title-page has the following certification:—"Published by Order of His Excellency the Governour & Council. Isaac Addington, Secr. Boston: Sept. 29th. 1714."

² See p. 85, above.

³ Born 1684, M. D. 1716, F. R. S. 1717 or 1718, Secretary from November 30, 1721, to Nov. 30, 1727, died 1750 (Weld, *History of the Royal Society*, i. 435 note 1, ii. 561; *Dictionary of National Biography*, xxx. 229-230).

⁴ *The Nation*, New York, February 18, 1892, liv. 127-128 (republished in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, xlv. 115-116, and by Slaughter, John Checkley, *Prince Society*, 1897, i. 41-44). I use the transcript in the Gay MS., fols. 173-178. The original is preserved in the Letter-Book of the Royal Society, M. 2. 36.

⁵ To *put upon*, in those days, meant either to "confer upon" or to "infect upon," according to the context. "Unexpected" requires a note, for it is easily misunderstood, and every word that Mather wrote is likely to encounter hostile scrutiny. The adjective applies, not to Waller's nomination of Mather on July 23, 1713 (for that was not unexpected, nor, under the Statutes, could it be unexpected: see p. 85, above). What Mather means is that the first suggestion that he should allow himself to be proposed as a candidate came as a surprise to him — and this is probably true (see p. 84), for it was an honor never yet conferred upon a born American.

and Body of the Society, on the Anniversary Day¹ for such elections, in the year 1713.² — Adding, that the only Reason of my not having my name in the *Printed List* of the *Society*, was because of my being beyond-Sea, and yett a Natural Born Subject, & so not capable of being inserted among the Gentlemen of other Nations.³

Nor was this all. In the Table of Contents in No. 339 of the *Philosophical Transactions*, issued in 1714, — the number that contains the excerpts from Mather's *Curiosa*, — there stand, in plain type, the words: "*An Extract of several Letters from Cotton Mather, D. D. F. R. S.,*"⁴ and of course this announcement remained when, in 1717, Nos. 338–350 were bound together and published as Volume XXIX. The *Philosophical Transactions*, though not actually issued, at this time, by the Royal Society, was universally understood to be its organ,⁵ and the editor was the Secretary of the Society, the illustrious Halley.⁶ "You[r] Secretary also," writes Mather to Jurin, "*D^r Halley, in the Philosophical Transactions of 1714 printed my*

¹ This is probably not quite accurate, for the Statutes of 1663 provide that "no person shall be proposed, elected, or admitted a Fellow of the Society upon St. Andrew's day, or the day of the anniversary meeting for electing the Council and Officers" (Chap. vi., sect. 9; *Diplomata et Statuta*, 1752, p. 84). The inaccuracy, however, is of no moment, as we shall see presently.

² I do not know whether this letter from Woodward is extant or not. But we may be sure that Mather does not misrepresent its tenor. He and Woodward had long been on friendly terms, and they so continued as long as Mather lived. Mather hoped for favorable action from the Royal Society on the question broached in this letter to Jurin. There was every probability that Woodward would see the letter. It might even be read in the Society. And of course Mather was counting on Woodward's support in case there was opposition or difficulty. For him to alienate his champion by misrepresentations would have been suicidal.

³ The annual Lists of the Royal Society each consisted of two parts, — British subjects and foreigners. Professor Carleton F. Brown has had the kindness to examine for me a file of these Lists (in the British Museum) for 1713–1730, and he informs me that Mather's name occurs in none of them.

⁴ xxix. 51. True, in the title at the head of the article itself (p. 62), we have "Cotton Mather, *D. D.*," without the F. R. S., but this is balanced by the fact that Woodward, in the same title, is designated simply as "John Woodward, *M. D.*," also without the F. R. S., though he had been a Fellow for years.

⁵ On this point see Weld, *History of the Royal Society*, i. 518–522.

⁶ Richard Waller was Secretary from November 30, 1687, to November 30, 1709; and again from November 30, 1710, to November 30, 1714. Halley was Secretary from November 30, 1713, to November 30, 1721. Thus Halley's term began before Waller's second term expired. There are other instances of such overlapping. See Weld, ii. 561.

Name, with an F. R. S. annexed unto it.”¹ And he continues: “Mr. *Petiver* did the like, in his *Naturæ Collectanea*; And in his Letters to me, he had these Words, ‘Your Election succeeded without opposition, and you were Elected after the usual Method of Balloting. The Reason of your being out of the *Printed List*, is your not being personally here, to subscribe to the Orders² that should be tendred you.’”

“Mr. Petiver” is James Petiver, F. R. S., the distinguished botanist and entomologist.³ Mather sent him (on September 24, 1716) a few dried American plants,⁴ with observations upon them and a personal letter.⁵ In the letter, Mather adverts to the fact that his name has never appeared in the printed list of Fellows. His words are these:

In y^e mean time, I shall not be altogether wanting in my Essayes to do y^e best I can in Obedience to your Commands. And I hope, annually to treat y^e Royal Society also with such a Number of Comūications, that if every Member of that Illustrious Body, whose Name stands in the Catalogue (an Honour not yett granted unto mine), will do but half as much, the Stores in your Collection will soon grow considerable.

¹ Letter of May 21, 1723 (see p. 94, and note 4, above).

² This refers to the language of the Statute requiring every Fellow elect to “subscribe the Obligation.” The pledge includes the words “we will observe the Statutes and Orders of the said Society” (Chap. ii, *Diplomata et Statuta*, 1752, p. 77).

³ F. R. S. 1695, died 1718. See Dictionary of National Biography, xlv. 85–86. Cf. Thoresby’s Diary, ii. 32, 147–148.

⁴ This is the “*Hortus Siccus* of American plants” mentioned by Mather in a catalogue of his communications to the Royal Society enclosed in his letter to Jurin, May 21, 1723. Mr. Darnell Davis ignores this catalogue, but I have been able to consult it in the Gay MS. (fols. 178–181).

⁵ Mather’s draught of the letter and the observations is in M. H. S. The letter itself is among Petiver’s papers in the British Museum (Sloane MS. 4065, fol. 255). It is marked “Rec^d ♂ Jan: 15. 171⁶.” The sign ♂ stands for Tuesday. I am indebted to our Corresponding Member, Mr. Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress, for copies of Sloane MSS.

Mather is so often regarded as a pushing kind of person that it is worth while to remark that in this instance, as in the correspondence with Woodward which seems to have led to his nomination (see p. 83, above), he did not obtrude himself. Petiver wrote to him first. This appears from the opening sentence of Mather’s letter: “Tis high time for me, to make some Return, that may expresse my sense of the obligations, which your Letters with what accompanied y^m, have laid upon me.”

It was in reply to this observation, we may be certain, that Petiver assured Mather that the election had been perfectly regular, and that the omission of his name from the printed list was explained by inability to be "personally here, to subscribe to the Orders that should be tendred you." It is peculiarly significant, in view of Mather's letter, that when, in the very next year (1717), Petiver included in his *Naturæ Collectanea* a list of the plants which he had received from Mather, he took special pains to accord his American correspondent the title of Fellow of the Royal Society at full length by prefixing an acknowledgment as follows:

Some *American Plants*, with their *Specifick Vertues* and *Wonderful Effects*, lately sent me by the *Reverend* and learned *Dr. Cotton Mather*, at *Boston* in *New England*, and Fellow of the *Royal Society*, London.¹

From 1714 to 1724 Mather was in active correspondence with the Royal Society and its members, and there is reason to believe that he was frequently addressed by such members as an F. R. S. Samuel Mather avers:

AFTER this² he had several Letters from many considerable Gentlemen of that Society, who always Superscribed their Letters to him as *F. R. S.* And he was assured by several of them, that he ought to affix *that Title* to his Name before his Works: otherwise he would never have done it. . . .

I have at this Time in my Hand, Letters to him from Mr. WALLER, Dr. CHAMBERLAIN, Dr. WOODWARD, Dr. JURIN, and others who give Dr. MATHER his Title, and express Concern some sordid People *here* will not allow it.³

I give the testimony of Samuel Mather for what it is worth, for I am well aware that whatever one member of this family says in behalf of any of his relatives is traditionally received, in this part of the world, with some caution. Still, it would be credulous incredulity to reject this evidence altogether, particularly since it accords, in its general purport, with what seems probable. Let me

¹ *Petiveriana* III, seu *Naturæ Collectanea*; *Domi Forisque Auctori Communicata*, London, 1717, p. 12, col. 2 (Harvard College Library).

² That is, after the receipt of Waller's letter of December 4, 1713, which Samuel Mather has just quoted.

³ *Life of Cotton Mather*, 1729, p. 78.

hasten to add that (for a reason which will appear later) we are here concerned with only such of these letters as were written before April 11, 1723, and that, in the absence of the letters themselves, we cannot be sure which of them preceded that date.¹ One of Chamberlayne's letters, however (of August 31, 1720), is fortunately quoted by Cotton Mather in a letter to John Winthrop (H. C. 1700), dated December 26, 1720. It is of much importance in settling the question whether Mather was or was not regarded at this time as an F. R. S. by the Fellows of that Society. Mather writes:

All the Return I have yett had of the Remittances I made the last *February* to the R. S.,² is an obliging Letter of Mr. *Chamberlain*,³ Aug. 31, whose words are, "I thank you for your Noble Entertainment with which so many of my Friends were Regaled, before I could gett a Snap for myself, who hungerd & thirsted for it, that I had not the pleasure thereof till very lately, and indeed too late to communicate the same pleasure to your Illustrious Brethren, the Gentlemen of the R. S. who have always a long Recess at this time of the year."⁴

Chamberlayne's words "your Illustrious Brethren, the Gentlemen of the Royal Society" are certainly equivalent to calling Mather an F. R. S. The same turn of phrase is used by Mather himself in *The Christian Philosopher*, 1721, when (after describing himself on the

¹ We know, however, that all of Waller's must have fallen within this limit, for he died before April 3, 1721 (see 1 Massachusetts Historical Proceedings, xiii. 111), — I think about 1715 (see p. 111 note 3, below). So of most of Chamberlayne's, for he died November 2, 1723 (Weld, *History of the Royal Society*, i. 414 note 29; Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, i. 257 b; *Dictionary of National Biography*, x. 9). That the letters from Jurin come later than May 21, 1723, is a natural (but uncertain) inference from the general tenor of Mather's letter to him of that date, and in particular from the way in which it begins.

² These "remittances" were twelve letters of *Curiosa Americana* to which Mather often refers in his correspondence with Winthrop (see 4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 435, 443, 448, 450, 452, 453, 455). They are enumerated in a catalogue enclosed in Mather's letter to Jurin, May 21, 1723 (Gay MS., fol. 180), but they appear to have perished. An unpublished letter from Mather to Henry Newman, February 17, 1720, sent with these communications and requesting him to hand them to Chamberlayne, is in the possession of the American Antiquarian Society. See p. 105 note 8, below.

³ John Chamberlayne, born about 1666, F. R. S. 1702, died November 2, 1723 (Weld, *History of the Royal Society*, i. 414, n. 29; Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, i. 257 b; *Dictionary of National Biography*, x. 9).

⁴ 4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 444.

title-page as "Fellow of the Royal Society") he speaks of a certain F. R. S. as "my Brother."¹ It is particularly interesting, in view of Chamberlayne's language (just quoted) to observe that it was into the form of a letter to him that Mather put his tract entitled *The World Alarm'd* (1721), which is described on the title-page as "a Letter to an Honourable Fellow of the Royal Society at London. From a Member of the same Society, at Boston."²

We must frankly admit that, if Cotton Mather was (as he supposed) a properly elected F. R. S., there was nothing irregular, according to the practice of the Society itself, in his being adorned with those letters, even in default of the ceremony of "admission." The Rev. William Brattle, of Cambridge, was elected a Fellow on March 11, 1714,³ and, so far as I know, his right to bear the title of F. R. S. (which stands after his name in the Harvard Quinquennial Catalogue) has not been questioned. Yet it is pretty clear that Brattle was never formally "admitted." He was in this country when his election took place,⁴ and it seems quite certain that he did

¹ P. 219.

² The tract is addressed "To J. C. Esq.;" and the identity of J. C. with Chamberlayne is established by the two following passages: (1) "Had we yet Living and Shining among us, the Admirable *Nieuentyt*, who has by your Excellent Care and Exquisite Skill, become an Instructor of our Nation," etc. (p. 14); (2) "Were I Master of as many Languages, as were Employ'd by the Learned for the Celebration of the *Peyreskius*, whom you have in so many things made your Pattern: Yea, or of as many Languages as you have lately given us, in a Collection which will immortalize your Name far more than so many Statues," etc. (p. 16). The first passage refers to Chamberlayne's translation of Bernard Nieuwentyt's *Religious Philosopher*, 1718-1719; the second to his publication of the Lord's Prayer in many languages (*Oratio Dominica in diversas omnium fere gentium linguas versa*, Amsterdam, 1715).

Mather himself describes the letter ("A Relation of a New Burning Island") as addressed "to M^r Chamberlain" in the catalogue enclosed in his letter to Jurin, May 21, 1723 (Gay MS., fol. 180) and in a list of *Curiosa* in A. A. S. he designates "*The World alarm'd, — with a New Burning Island*" as a "L[etter] to M^r Chamberlain."

The *World Alarm'd* is anonymous, but only formally so; for the author plainly identifies himself with "The Christian Philosopher" on the last page of the epistle (p. 16), and immediately facing that page is a list of books "To be Sold by Samuel Gerrish," the first of which is "*The Christian Philosopher . . . By Cotton Mather, D. D. and Fellow of the Royal Society.*"

³ Thomas Thomson, *History of the Royal Society*, 1812, Appendix, p. xxxiii; N. Darnell Davis, *Register*, xvi. 117.

⁴ He was present at a meeting of the President and Fellows of Harvard College

not visit England between March 11, 1714, and February 15, 1717 (when he died ¹). Paul Dudley was elected a Fellow on November 2, 1721,² and his name occurs with the title F. R. S. several times in the Philosophical Transactions.³ Dudley lived until 1751, and I cannot undertake to say that he never went to England in the interim. If so, however, nobody has recorded the fact. And, at any rate, I feel sure that (if he eventually *did* take the voyage) he had not done so before the Secretary had described him as F. R. S. in the Transactions at least half-a-dozen times. These examples are instructive with regard to the custom of the time in this matter.

It does not appear that anybody challenged Cotton Mather's right to style himself an F. R. S. until 1720, although in the interim (beginning, as we have observed, in 1714, immediately after the receipt of Secretary Waller's notification of his election) he had appended the letters to his name on several title-pages.⁴ In this year, however, the question was raised by John Checkley in a very curious

on March 16, 1713-14 (President Leverett's MS. Diary, Harvard College Library).

¹ On this day Sewall records his death, — "last night at midnight" (Diary, iii. 120).

² Thomson, as above, p. xxxv; J. T. Hassam, 2 Massachusetts Historical Proceedings, xvi. 35.

³ Nos. 364 (xxx. 27), 367 (xxx. 145), 368 (xxx. 165), 374 (xxx. 231), 376 (xxx. 292), 384 (xxx. 129), 385 (xxx. 194), 387 (xxx. 256), 398 (xxx. 261), 437 (xxx. 63). In each case the letters are attached to Dudley's name in the title of one of his communications. In the last-cited instance, Dudley, in describing the earthquake of October 29, 1727, in a letter to the Secretary, dated "Roxbury, Nov. 13, 1727," makes use of the following language: "I think it my Duty, and hope it will be acceptable to the Society, to have the Particulars from one of their own Members."

⁴ The Glorious Throne (1714) has already been mentioned (p. 89, above). The following volumes also append F. R. S. to Mather's name (there are doubtless others — I do not aim to be exhaustive): — Pascentius, Nuncia Bona e Terra Longinqua, Parentalia, Shaking Dispensations, The Religion of the Closet, 4th edition (all 1715); Fair Dealing, Life Swiftly Passing (1716); Hades Look'd Into, The Valley of Baca (1717); Concio ad Populum, Desiderius, Mirabilia Dei (1719); Undoubted Certainties (1720). In 1721 and 1722 I note the following books in which Mather lays claim to this honor: — The Christian Philosopher (probably published in 1720, though dated 1721); Genuine Christianity, India Christiana, A Vision in the Temple (1721). Coheleth (1720) and The Angel of Bethesda (1722) are described on the title-page as "by a Fellow of the Royal Society." For The World Alarm'd (1721), see p. 95 note 2, above.

fashion. In 1719¹ Checkley had attacked Mather and Thomas Walter, Mather's nephew, in the preface to his *Choice Dialogues*.² Walter replied to the *Dialogues* in 1720. This reply was believed by Checkley to be "the joint Labours of the grand Committee" of ministers, "but taggd together by M^r Walter and by him adorned with those many Billingsgate Flowers which have so delicately perfum'd the whole Piece."³ Checkley also conceived himself to have been hardly used by the action of the Court of General Sessions in the matter of the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and he ascribed his prosecution — not, I dare say, to Cotton Mather in particular but to the dominant party in general, among whom Mather was a leader. However exalted Checkley's motives may have been, he was quite as bigoted as any of his opponents, and there is no doubt that he was only too eager to discover weapons to use against Mather. Now Mather's name, as we have seen, was not appearing in the annual List of Fellows of the Royal Society. He had commented on the omission himself, in letters to some of the Fellows in England, and had received explanations which justified him in still styling himself F. R. S., particularly as his correspondents in the Society so addressed him. Whether Checkley had inspected one of the annual lists or not, we cannot tell. Probably he had. We know that the omission of Mather's name in them was public property in Boston as early as February, 1722, and Mather himself asserts, in a letter in which he mentions Checkley, that it was this omission that gave rise to the attack upon the genuineness of his title.⁴ At any rate, Checkley knew (like everybody else) that Mather had styled himself F. R. S. on various title-pages, and he smelt imposture. Accordingly, on August 22, 1720, he wrote to Colonel Francis Nicholson, then in London, and begged him to ascertain the facts.⁵ Nicholson, I fancy, "did not like the office" — to borrow Iago's phrase. Besides, the letter reached him when he was very busy. He had just

¹ The book bears no date. Dr. Slafter assigns it to 1719 or 1720 (*John Checkley*, Prince Society, 1897, i. 34, ii. 230). The latter is the latest possible date and is more probable than the former.

² Slafter, i. 145-148.

³ Letter to the Rev. James McSparran, June 26, 1721 (Slafter, i. 154-155).

⁴ See p. 100 note 2, below.

⁵ Checkley's letter to Nicholson has not been found, but he mentions it, and gives the date, in his letter to Halley.

been sworn (on September 27, 1720¹) as Governor of South Carolina, and he was getting ready for departure. He sailed from Plymouth for America in March, 1721,² and "just before his sailing" he sent Checkley "a verbal Message by a Gentleman, that the Hurry of his Affairs at that Time had hindered him from procuring" Checkley the needed information, "but that He wou'd desire Cap^t Halley to send [Checkley] a Certificate relating to the Business."³

Now the gentleman⁴ with the "verbal message" must have reached Boston at almost the same time as the ship which brought a hundred copies of Mather's *Christian Philosopher*, printed in London. This ship came into port in the course of the five days immediately preceeding March 31, 1721.⁵ Checkley was a bookseller and a reading

¹ South Carolina Historical Collections, ii. 150; Acts of the Privy Council, ii. 794.

² This I infer from a letter from Nicholson to Alban Butler, dated Plymouth, March 8, 1721 (MS. Letter-Book of the Royal Society, N. 1. 89, cited by Andrews and Davenport, *Guide to the Manuscript Materials*, 1908, p. 365), which was manifestly written just before sailing, — as well as from the date on which Nicholson arrived in South Carolina, May 22, 1721 (South Carolina Historical Collections, i. 232).

³ Checkley's letter to Halley, April 26, 1721 (Slafter, ii. 151-152).

⁴ Probably he came with Captain Bourn, who arrived on April 8, 1721, seven weeks from London; or with Captain Tuthill, of the snow *Anna*, who arrived on April 14th, nine weeks from London (see Sewall, *Diary*, iii. 287, 288).

⁵ Jeremiah Dummer wrote to Mather from London on September 12, 1720, with regard to *The Christian Philosopher*: "Your Book is compleatly printed; but I don't yett publish it, because in the Recess of Parliamt, all people of Distinction are out of Town, and if it should come abroad now, it would be an old Book before the parliamt meets. This is a piece of prudence that the best Authors are obliged to use. Besides, I have not yett determined upon the Patron" (quoted by Mather in a letter to John Winthrop, December 26, 1720: 4 *Massachusetts Historical Collections*, viii. 445). A patron was soon found, for the dedication ("To Mr. *Thomas Hollis*, Merchant in *London*"), signed by the Rev. Thomas Bradbury, is dated "*London, Sept. 22. 1720.*" Doubtless the book was published before the end of the year, and the "1721" in the imprint was the customary bookseller's trick of post-dating. Checkley (in his letter to Halley) says it was published in 1720 (Slafter, ii. 152), and Samuel Mather puts it under that year (*Life of Cotton Mather*, p. 174). Cotton Mather himself, in an unpublished letter of December 10, 1720, to Josiah Everleigh of Crediton, England (in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society), remarks: — "There is newly published (as I am told, for I have not yett seen it,) in *London*, a Book entituled, *The CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER.*" The first consignment of the books left England in that winter, but the ship was blown off the New England coast, took refuge in Antigua, and did not arrive in Boston until March 26-31, 1721. This appears from Mather's *Diary*, March 31, 1721 (which was Friday): — "My,

man. He soon got hold of one of these volumes and noted that the title-page described the author as a "*Fellow of the ROYAL SOCIETY.*" Here was a fresh document in his case against Mather. Checkley was too ardent a controversialist to wait patiently for the results of Nicholson's promised letter to the Secretary of the Society, — which, indeed, might never have been written at all. He took the inquiry into his own hands and, on April 26, 1721, he directed a fervid appeal to Halley, a perfect stranger, enclosing a copy of the epistle that he had previously despatched to Nicholson, and continuing in the extraordinary terms that follow:

Thus (S^r) you have both my Petition & the Cause of it. And now I most humbly entreat of you (Cap^t Halley) to send me a Certificate under your own Hand, relating to M^r Mather's being a Fellow or not a Fellow of the royal Society. Mr Mather hath published a Book in London in 1720, entituled the *Christian Philosopher*, in which He writes Himself at Length, Fellow of the royal Society. Teacher Bradbury writes a Preface to it inscrib'd to M^r Hollis. S^r, your sending me the Certificate by the very first Opportunity, will capacitate me to defend myself from these Sons of Strife, Schism & Sedition, and will indeed be an Act of Charity to a distressed, persecuted (but I thank God a true) Son of our Holy Mother the Church of England, and your unknown, but very humble & devoted Serv^t.¹

The tone of this impertinent request shows how uncharitably certain Checkley felt that Mather had been sailing under false colors. It is amusing to notice that he desires Halley to address his reply

Christian Philosopher, in a vessel blown off our Coast last Winter,) is this Week arrived from *England*; an Hundred of the Books are come," and from his letter to John Winthrop, April 17, 1721: — "Our CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER (blown off the last Winter to *Antigua*) is newly arrived. And tho' I am not myself made owner of more than one, yett our Bookseller has one Hundred" (4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 447). The bookseller was Samuel Gerrish: see his advertisement at the end of *The World Alarm'd*, 1721 (p. 95 note 2, above).

¹ Slafter, ii. 152-153. It is well to remember that Checkley was involved, in some fashion, in the proceedings against Mather in the vexatious business of Nathan Howells's estate. On December 31, 1720, Checkley writes to John Read: "The papers against M^r Mather I have still by me, the reason this; I shewed them to M^r Hearne, who said it wou'd be to no purpose to proceed without one of the Witnesses cou'd be present to prove the Bond. I wish this Affair had been committed to some other Person, lest my appearing in it shou'd seem to proceed from Spite & ill Will" (Slafter, ii. 145).

to "Doct^r John Checkley," thus himself assuming a title which was popularly given to him (as an apothecary) in Boston, but which, educated as he was in England, he must have known would hardly have been accorded him in the mother country.¹

It is highly improbable that Halley deigned to answer Checkley's letter. But it appears to have been read at a meeting of the Society;²

¹ The Rev. Samuel Lee, in writing to Dr. Nehemiah Grew, June 25, 1690, about the medical profession in Boston, remarks: "Practitioners are laureated gratis with a title feather of Doctor. Potecaries, Surgeons & Midwives are dignified acc. to Successe" (Sloane MS. 4062, fol. 235 r^o). Checkley, in Dr. Slafter's phrase, kept "a variety store," and "in this little shop he sold books and medicines, and such small articles of merchandise as would command a ready sale in a thriving New England village" (i. 13).

² "A distinguished, & a diminutive Crue of Odd people here, when they could find no other Darts to throw at me, imagined their not finding my name in the printed List of the *Royal Society*, would enable them to detect me of an Impos- ture, for affixing an F. R. S. unto my Name, on some Just Occasions for it. And an Infamous Fellow, whose name is *John Checkley*, a *Sorry Toyman*, (that yett had the Impudence to write as a *Divine*) wrote a Letter full of Scandalous In- vectives against me, which was publicly read in the *Royal Society*. This wretched Man, ambitious to do the part of a *Divine*, printed here some Rapsodies, to prove, *That the God whom K. William, and the Christians of New England, have Worshipped*, is the *D—l*— A young and a Bright Kinsman of mine, bestowed such Castigations on the Blasphemer, that I became thereupon the object of his Im- placable Revenges" (Mather to Jurin, May 21, 1723; printed by N. Darnell Davis, see p. 90 note 4, above: I follow the Gay MS., fols. 174-175).

Mr. Darnell Davis's copy unfortunately made Mather call Checkley "a *Sorry Toryman*" instead of "*Toyman*." The latter term describes Checkley by his occupation, since he kept a "variety store." *Toy*, in the language of Mather's time meant, not merely "plaything," but "any small or trifling object." Mather's remark that Checkley "had the Impudence to write as a *Divine*" refers to the fact that Checkley's anonymous tract, *Choice Dialogues*, professed to be "By a *Reverend and Laborious Pastor in Christ's Flock*, by *One* who has been, for almost *twice thirty years*, a *faithful & Painful Labourer in Christ's Vine-yard*."

Dr. Slafter (John Checkley, i. 48) regards the charge which Mather brings against Checkley of "printing some rhapsodies to prove that the God whom K. William and the Christians of New England have worshipped is the Devil" as quite unjustified by the language of the tract. I must say, however, that a careful scrutiny of Checkley's words (Slafter, i. 152-153) leaves upon my mind the impression that Mather has not seriously distorted their implication. Checkley certainly allows the Countryman to say that a certain doctrine of high Calvinism "seems all *Blasphemy* to me; to represent the infinit *Goodness* and *Father of Mercies*, in the Colours of *Cruelty* it self, that you cou'd not exceed it in the Description of the *Devil*!" and the Minister (who voices the author's sentiments) seems rather to justify the Countryman by remarking, "Therefore the *Lutherans* have charg'd the *Calvinists* with Worshipping the *Devil*," and by explaining their

and to have prompted Mather's constant friend, Dr. John Woodward, to write to Mather inquiring what the trouble was. Mather replied, in November, 1721, explaining his relations with Checkley, and (no doubt) begging Woodward for some assurance as to his actual status.

I have said that Woodward was Mather's constant friend. This will come out clearly in the sequel, but it is satisfactory to know for certain that in the very month in which Checkley was penning his missive to Halley, Woodward had written (April 3, 1721) to Mather in the most friendly manner, explaining the failure of the Philosophical Transactions to print some of Mather's communications on the ground that "the Editors, since Mr. Wallers Death, are very neglect-full & partial; by which the Society suffers not a little," and adding: "For my own Part I have not been wanting in Doing you Justice: and makeing the Curious here sensible of your Diligence there."¹

I have said that Mather wrote to Dr. Woodward in November, 1721, giving him an account, in response to an inquiry, of the quarrel which had led to Checkley's missive to Halley. This fact, and this date, may be gathered from a passage in Mather's subsequent letter to Jurin.² But we have other evidence, enabling us to fix the date with exactness, for in Mather's Diary, under November 30, 1721, occurs the following entry:

Writing letters for *Europe*, I send over many Things, that I hope, will serve the Kingdom of GOD. And particularly, among the rest, I write a further and a more distinet Account of the *Small-pox inoculated*, the

logical process in arriving at this conclusion. True, Checkley does not make the Minister accept the position of the Lutherans in so many words, but the Minister certainly appears to have no objection to it.

¹ 1 Massachusetts Historical Proceedings, xiii. 110-111. On the same date (*ibid.*) Woodward writes to John Winthrop (H. C. 1700), whom Mather had brought into epistolary relations with him about 1718 (4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 428). He thanks Winthrop for shells, asks for fossils and Indian bones and utensils, and mentions Mather: "D^r Mather has said nothing, as yet about the Water Doves that you Sent Him." On the water dove see Collections, as above, viii. 435, 436.

² "But of this matter I gave D^r Woodward a more full Account, a year and half ago." "I shall keep such Terms, as I used unto my Doctor, when he had what he required [i. e., requested] of me upon it" (Mather to Jurin, May 21, 1723, Gay MS., fol. 175). Eighteen months before May, 1723, would be November, 1721.

Method and Success of it among us, and the Opposition to it; By which Means, I hope, some hundreds of thousands of Lives, may in a little while come to be preserved.

The document to which this entry particularly refers is easily identified. It was a formal communication to the Royal Society, addressed to Dr. Woodward, and entitled "A further Account of the Method and Success of the Small-pox Inoculated,"—under which title it stands catalogued, in Mather's handwriting, in a list of *Curiosa Americana* which were certainly sent to the Society (addressed to Woodward) at about this time.¹ With every such packet of scientific communications it was Mather's habit to send a covering letter, of a more personal and informal character, and it was, we may be sure, in the personal letter to Woodward (enclosing the "Further Account" and other communications) that Mather replied to Dr. Woodward's inquiry about the trouble with Checkley which had prompted the latter to despatch his extraordinary epistle to Halley. Thus we are enabled to assign Mather's reply to Woodward's inquiry to a precise date, — November 30, 1721.

One question, of immense significance, emerges from our jejune collation of dates and documents:— Was not the agitation concerning Mather's right to wear the title of F. R. S. — started (it seems) by Checkley in 1720 — furthered and intensified by the inoculation controversy in Boston?² This controversy broke out in June, 1721, when Mather issued (in manuscript) his Address to the Physicians.³

¹ This list (in the possession of the American Antiquarian Society) consists of thirteen titles and is headed: "Curiosa Americana, Continued — In letters to D^r John Woodward." It is the table of contents once belonging to a sheaf of draughts which have perished, while *it* survives, a loose leaf laid in a MS. volume of other draughts (also of *Curiosa*). The same list of thirteen articles occurs (with variations in some of the titles) in the catalogue enclosed in Mather's letter to Jurin, May 21, 1723 (Gay MS., fols. 179–181). There is much to be said about these thirteen *Curiosa*, but this is not the place to discuss them. I could make it practically certain, if space allowed, that the third of the thirteen was the "further Account" mentioned in the Diary, November 30, 1721.

² See Dr. Reginald H. Fitz's admirable paper, Zabdiel Boylston, Inoculator, and the Epidemic of Smallpox in Boston in 1721 (The Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin, No. 247, September, 1911, xxii. 315–327).

³ For the date, June 6, 1721, see A Vindication of the Ministers of Boston, 1722 (dated at the end, January 30, 1721–2), p. 7, and [Isaac Greenwood,] A Friendly Debate; or A Dialogue between Academicus; and Sawny & Mundungus, 1722 (dedication dated February 15, 1721–2), pp. 5–6.

The Royal Society was keenly interested, and news from the seat of war was always welcome. The first inoculation in Boston was performed by Zabdiel Boylston, at Mather's instance, on June 26, 1721,¹ and it is possible that Mather apprised Dr. Woodward of it immediately, in a letter of June 29th.² It is certain, at any rate, that on September 25th Dr. William Douglass, the vociferous and determined opponent of Mather and Boylston, wrote from Boston to Alexander Stuart, M. D., F. R. S., in London,³ inquiring what English physicians thought of "this rash practice," expressing his own opposition to it, and describing Mather as "a certain credulous Preacher of this place." His letter was read before the Royal Society, presumably by Stuart, on November 16, 1721.⁴ The English doctors, of course, were not all of one mind. Dr. James Jurin, the Secretary of the Royal Society, was much in favor of inoculation.⁵ Dr. Stuart's attitude I do not know, but his public reading of Douglass's letter looks unfriendly to the practice.

Early in 1722 Douglass put forth an anti-inoculation tract, in the form of a Letter to Stuart, dated December 20, 1721, in which he twits Mather on his correspondence with the Royal Society. "A certain Reverend Gentleman of the Town," he calls him, "a Man of *Whim* and *Credulity*," who thought the outbreak of the smallpox "a fit Opportunity to make Experiments on his Neighbours, (which in his Vanity he might judge acceptable to the Royal Society)." ⁶

¹ Boylston, *An Historical Account of the Small-Pox Inoculated*, 1726, p. 2.

² On this date Mather remarks, in his *Diary*, "I am writing for *London*, and sending more Things to serve the Kingdome of God."

³ For Stuart, see Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, ii. 95, n.* He died on September 15, 1742.

⁴ The letter is preserved in the Letter-Book of the Royal Society, D. 2. f. 2 (Gay MS., fol. 259-261). It is endorsed as "read Nov^r. 16. 1721."

⁵ On Jurin, see Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, v. 122; *Literary Anecdotes*, vi. 92-93, n. §§, ix. 506. He died March 22, 1749-50, in his 66th year. For his interest in inoculation, and the eagerness with which he welcomed news on the subject from New England, see especially his essay entitled *A Letter to the Learned Dr. Caleb Cotesworth . . . ; containing a Comparison between the Danger of the Natural Small Pox, and of that given by Inoculation* (*Philosophical Transactions*, No. 374, for November-December, 1722, xxxii. 213-227), in which he quotes a letter from Mather, March 10, 1721-2 (preserved in Sloane MS. 3324, fol. 260), and to which he appends an account from Captain John Osborne which, as he says, "confirms the Extract given above from Mr. Mather's Relation" (p. 225).

⁶ *Inoculation of the Small Pox as practised in Boston, Consider'd in a Letter*

And again, near the end, he styles Mather "a certain *Gentleman*, (who you know in times past has been troublesome to the R. S. with his trivial credulous Stories)." ¹

This last slur must have been particularly galling to Mather, who was rather sensitive about the delay which the Fellows of the Society sometimes showed in acknowledging his communications and about the failure of most of them to get into print. He betrays this feeling in writing to John Winthrop (H. C. 1700) ² and also in some of his letters to his correspondents in the Society. ³ Indeed, he had apparently been unable to conceal his sensitiveness from his associates in Boston, — even from Douglass himself, with whom, before this quarrel about inoculation, he had been on excellent terms. ⁴ Douglass adverts to the matter again in a letter to Cadwallader Colden (May 1, 1722), in which he characterizes "Mather, Jr." as "a credulous vain preacher," and alleges that he "set inoculation at work" in order "that he might have something to send home to the Royal Society who had long neglected his communications as he complained." ⁵

Douglass's sneers did not pass unnoticed by Mather's friends, and it is particularly instructive to observe the way in which Isaac Greenwood expresses himself in February, 1722, ⁶ on this point of Mather's connection with the Royal Society, in his little masterpiece of controversial raillery, the Dialogue between Academicus, and Sawny and Mundungus. "He," says Academicus (Greenwood) to Sawny (Douglass), "has been above Forty Years a Celebrated Preacher, and has been so acknowledged by *Foreign Universities*, as no *American* ever was before him, and justly merited the Honour of being a *Member* of the ROYAL SOCIETY." ⁷ Greenwood's challenge was instantly

to A—— S—— M. D. & F. R. S. in London (Boston, 1722), pp. 1-2. The tract, though anonymous, was well known to be by Douglass.

¹ P. 20.

² 4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 440, 444, 448, 449, 452, 453, 455.

³ To Woodward, July, 1716, and July 25, 1717 (M. H. S.); to Jurin, May 21, 1723 (Gay MS., fol. 175). Cf. Woodward's letter to Mather, April 3, 1721 (1 Massachusetts Historical Proceedings, xiii. 111).

⁴ [Isaac Greenwood,] A Friendly Debate, 1722, pp. 19-20.

⁵ 4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, ii. 169.

⁶ The dedication ("To my very Worthy Physician, Mr. Zabdiel Boylston") is dated "*E musæo meo*, Feb. 15. 1721, 2."

⁷ A Friendly Debate; or, A Dialogue, between Academicus; and Sawny & Mundungus (Boston, 1722), p. 13.

accepted in an anonymous Dialogue between Rusticus and Academicus,¹ which is dedicated in mockery "To the Very Reverend and Learned Dr. Cotton Mather, Fellow of the Royal Society." In the Advertisement prefixed, the anonymous author takes pains to refer to "C. M. D. D. and F. R. S.," and again (echoing Greenwood's phrases) to "the said C. M. (who has justly merited the Honour of being a Member of the ROYAL SOCIETY)." Further, in the course of his dialogue, he uses, as a kind of *ipse dixit*, the sentence, "*Dr. Cotton Mather (Fellow of the Royal Society) says so.*"² Once more, when he is about to quote Oldmixon's violent attack³ on the Magnalia, he prefaces it by repeating Greenwood's praise of Mather (which I have just quoted) word for word.⁴ And finally, in appending a document which he ascribes to Mather's son,⁵ he speaks of this young man as "an *Academical Brother* (Son to a Fellow of the Royal Society)."⁶

All this does not, in strictness, denote a doubt of the genuineness of Mather's title of F. R. S., though it certainly is susceptible of that interpretation, in view of the fact that the question had already been raised among his enemies. But in this same year (1722) Douglass went to press with another Letter to Stuart,⁷ in which he not only ridiculed Mather's communications to the Royal Society,⁸ but

¹ A Friendly Debate; or, A Dialogue between Rusticus and Academicus, Boston, 1722. The dedication, burlesquing Greenwood's, is dated "*From the South Side of my Hay-stack, March 9. 1721, 2.*"

² P. 2.

³ "What Mr. Oldmixon says in his *History of the British Colonies*, Page 108, 109." The work referred to is Oldmixon's *British Empire in America*, 1708, vol. i.

⁴ P. 5.

⁵ That is, of course, Samuel Mather (1706-1785), then (like Greenwood) a student in Harvard College, where he took his first degree in 1723.

⁶ P. 8.

⁷ The Abuses and Scandals of some late Pamphlets in Favour of Inoculation of the Small Pox, Modestly obviated, and Inoculation further consider'd in a Letter to A—S—M. D. & F. R. S. in London. Boston, 1722. This is dated at the end "Feb. 15th, 1721, 22."

⁸ Pp. 6-7. He refers particularly to three: (1) a letter to Woodward, November, 1712, as reported in the *Philosophical Transactions*, xxix. [64]; (2) the squaring of the circle; (3) "the Longitude at Sea." "The Quadrature of the Circle" was one of a series of twelve communications sent by Mather to John Chamberlayne, F. R. S., in February, 1720 (see catalogue enclosed in the letter to Jurin, May 21, 1723, Gay MS., fol. 180; Mather to John Winthrop, December 26, 1720, and

went so far as to suggest that the Society had repudiated him. "Perhaps," writes Douglass, "he may oblige this his *Alma Mater*¹ to disown him for a Son, as it seems the *Royal Society* have already done, by omitting his Name in their yearly Lists."²

Finally, on November 21, 1722, John Checkley sailed for England.³ By this time, in all human probability, Mather had learned that Checkley's letter of April 26, 1721, and Douglass's of September 25, 1721, had been read before the Royal Society. No reply had come from Mather's letter of November 30, 1721, to Dr. Woodward⁴ — we should remember that the postal service was irregular and precarious, and that packets were continually miscarrying. Stuart must have been regarded by Mather as a hostile influence within the Society. The fact that Douglass claimed Stuart as an old friend⁵

March 12, 1722-3: 4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 444, 455). In his letter to Winthrop on March 12, 1722-3, Mather writes: "Mr. *Chamberlain* tells me (and I feel it from other circumstances,) That my XII Letters to him have been published. And yett I have never to this Hour seen them." The "other circumstances" which in Mather's mind confirmed Chamberlayne's words, were, I suppose, this passage in Douglass's book, for Mather did not see how Douglass could have known of his paper on squaring the circle unless it had been printed. But the essay is not known to exist, either in print or in manuscript. As for the paper on Longitude, that is not even mentioned in any of Mather's lists of his *Curiosa*. I suspect it formed a part, either of this essay on the Circle or of some other letter of the twelve sent to Chamberlayne. If (as seems probable) these letters were *not* published, some member of the Society must have given Douglass his information, — Stuart, I should conjecture.

¹ That is, the University of Glasgow. Douglass is referring to Mather's degree of D. D.

² Introduction, p. [ii].

³ Sewall, Diary, iii. 312. Sewall says that Checkley sailed for London "in Barlow," — that is, in Captain Henry Barlow's vessel, probably the Hanover. At all events, that was Henry Barlow's vessel in June, 1721 ("Hen. Barlow, Hanover for London" is recorded as "outward bound" in the Boston News-Letter for June 29-July 3, 1721, No. 908, p. 2). Dr. Slafter inadvertently confuses the vessel with the captain and says that Checkley sailed "in the ship *Barlow*" (John Checkley, i. 49). Checkley reached Boston, on his return, on September 23, 1723 (cf. Slafter, i. 49, 50 n. 40, ii. 162, with the Boston Gazette, September 30, 1723, p. 4/1 — a reference which I owe to Mr. Albert Matthews).

⁴ No reply had reached Mather by May 21, 1723, as appears from his letter to Jurin of that date.

⁵ Douglass begins his printed letter of February 15, 1721-2 (The Abuses and Scandals, etc.), with the words: "Our former Intimacy in our Travels and Study abroad is all the Apology I shall make for addressing you with this Letter."

and had dedicated two anti-Mather pamphlets to him¹ would inevitably produce that impression, even if no report of Stuart's attitude (whatever that attitude may have been) had reached Boston. So far as I know, Mather nowhere mentions Stuart, but there is a bare possibility that he alludes to him in a letter to Woodward, dated September 21, 1724. This letter is devoted to the famous *Amphisbæna*, immortalized by Whittier (with the inevitable fling at Cotton Mather) in his poem of *The Double-headed Snake of Newbury*. Here Mather subscribes himself "one, who forever wishes your Protection from the *Amphisbæna* in *humane Shape* among you."² Perhaps this is Stuart, whose other head may have been Douglass! But another interpretation is far more probable.

At all events, by the spring of 1723, there were reasons enough why Mather should think it high time to put an end to the current discussion as to his right to call himself an F. R. S. He had no doubt — it is inconceivable that he should have had any doubt — that he was fully justified in wearing that title; but the situation was awkward, and some action on his part seemed advisable. Accordingly, on May 21, 1723, he addressed a straightforward and cir-

In his *Practical Essay concerning the Small Pox* (Boston, 1730), which is dedicated to Stuart, Douglass is more specific: "Our former Intimacy in the Universities in Holland and Hospitals in Flanders, inclined me to this Address."

¹ Inoculation of the Small Pox as practised in Boston (1722) and *The Abuses and Scandals* (1722).

² Royal Society Letter-Book, M. 2. 47 (Gay MS., fol. 222). Mather's draught (dated September 21, 1724) is in M. H. S. Mather's informant as to the Newbury monster was the Rev. Christopher Toppan (see an extract from Toppan's letter of July 6, 1724, in Joshua Coffin's *History of Newbury*, 1845, p. 195). Unfortunately Mather's words in the letter to Woodward are ambiguous; "your Protection" may mean either "protection at your hands" or "protection for you." If the latter is the sense (as the context makes probable), Mather may be alluding to Dr. Richard Mead (1673-1754), who had attacked Woodward with a sword and put him in danger of his life in 1719. Woodward's own account of the affray (headed "Relation of a Duel," and dated June 13, 1719) may be read in Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*, vi. 641-642 (from *The Weekly Journal*, London, June 20, 1719); cf. vi. 212 ff. Woodward had sent Mather an account of the affair, which he received in July, 1720, and sent to John Winthrop (Mather to Winthrop, July 15, 1720, 4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 440). Mather's reply to Woodward, July 27, 1720, is in A. A. S. Mather also sent Winthrop, on August 29, 1720, a copy of his reply to Woodward (viii. 442), which Woodward acknowledged as a "very civil Letter of the later End of last Summer" on April 3, 1721 (1 Massachusetts Historical Proceedings, xiii. 110).

cumstantial letter to Dr. James Jurin, then Secretary of the Society, reciting the facts of his election as he had understood them from Waller and Woodward, mentioning that both Halley and Petiver had adorned him with the letters F. R. S. in printed works (the former in the *Philosophical Transactions* itself), saying that he had been accused of imposture for using the title on appropriate occasions, and requesting Jurin to give him an authoritative and final decision as to whether he was or was not an F. R. S. I do not see how a man in Mather's position could have expressed himself in better taste than he shows in the following sentences, near the close of this letter to Jurin:

But if after all, it be the pleasure of those Honourable Persons, who compose or Govern the *Royal Society*, that I should lay aside my pretensions to be at all Related unto that Illustrious Body upon the least Signification of it by your pen, it shall be dutifully complied withal. I will only continue to take the leave of still communicating Annually to you (as long as I live) what *Curiosa Americana* I can become the possessor of. For (my Jewish Rabbis having taught me, to *Love y^e Work* and have *little Regard unto the Rabbinate*) it is not the *Title*, but the *Service*, that is the Heighth, & indeed the Whole of my Ambition.¹

And to prove that he was in earnest in his protestations, he enclosed an elaborate manuscript tract on inoculation (a subject in which he knew that Jurin was profoundly interested), and promised other communications in about a fortnight.² That he kept his word is

¹ I take this from the transcript in the Gay MS. (fol. 177), which seems to be a more exact copy than that printed by Mr. Darnell Davis.

² "As a Token of my purposes this way, and as an Earnest, of a much greater Variety, which I propose to send you by another Hand, about a Fortnight hence, I now present you with a tedious account of Sentiments & Occurrents, relating to a Subject, about which I perceive you are solicitous to have y^e exactest Informations" (Gay MS., fols. 177-178). What we know of Jurin would justify us in conjecturing that this subject was inoculation (cf. p. 103, above), but we can have certainty, for, in a later letter to Jurin (June 10, 1723), introducing Isaac Greenwood ("One of o^r *Inoculates*"), Mather says: "a few Days ago, I wrote you a Large Account of the Success w^{ch} the *Small Pox Inoculated* has had in these parts of the World" (Gay MS., fol. 210). He refers to this account again in a letter to Jurin, October 5, 1724: — "I should not have been sorry, if my Letter to you, Justifying the *Inoculation of the Small-pox*, had been published: — might it at all have contributed unto the more General Entertainment, of so Marvellous, — but, alas, how Satanically despised — a Blessing" (Gay MS., fol. 255).

We may confidently identify with "the tedious account" thus despatched to

shown by a series of seven letters to Jurin (June 3-8, 10, 1723) in the archives of the Royal Society.¹ Evidently Mather wished to demonstrate that he really meant to be serviceable, whether or not the Society should confirm him in his title.

Jurin's reply to Mather's letter has not been found. Mr. Darnell Davis, in printing the document, remarks that it would be interesting to know what it was, and adds:

A diligent search among the records of the Society has, however, failed to find that Cotton Mather's name was ever submitted to the general body of Fellows. Would it be an undue surmise to suspect that Cotton Mather's mistaken zeal in the witchcraft heresy stood in the way of his obtaining a two-thirds vote [i. e., in 1713, when his name passed the Council],² and that, the Council finding this the case, did not risk a rejection?³

Dr. Slafter, after quoting these words, with approval, continues with another suggestion:

But in addition to this, his Sermon before the General Court in Boston in 1690 had been published, and was by no means flattering to the members of the Church of England. His open and violent hostility to the Church, and abusive language concerning it must have been known, and could not have gained for him many friends among the Fellows of the Royal Society, who were, we presume, mostly prominent members of the Church of England.⁴

And now we arrive at the two pieces of fresh evidence which are my only excuse for the present paper.

Several months ago I came across an entry in the Diary of the

Jurin on May 21, 1723, a letter of which the draught (in Mather's hand) is in A. A. S. It is dated May 4, 1723, is headed "The Case of the Small-Pox Inoculated; further Cleared. To D^r James Jurin," and occupies twenty-one pages of manuscript. It well deserves printing.

¹ Copies are in the Gay MS., fols. 181-209. Mather's original draughts are in A. A. S. Two of these letters were read at meetings of the Society (as endorsements in the Letter-Book show), — that of June 7 ("The Land Sail'd upon") on December 5, and that of June 10 ("A Singular Case") on December 12, 1723. The covering letter (June 10, 1723) introduces the bearer of the packet, Isaac Greenwood.

² Passage in brackets mine.

³ The Nation, liv. 128; Register, xlv. 117.

⁴ Slafter, John Checkley, i. 47.

distinguished antiquary, Ralph Thoresby, F. R. S., under date of April 11, 1723:

Afternoon: transcribing rest of Mr. Thomas Milner's will and benefactions, till four, at the Royal Society; I gave my vote for the Rev. Mr. Williams, to be librarian; and keeper of the Museum; he had more votes than most of the eight candidates, yet was outdone by one, viz., Mr. Hawkesby; after I had voted for Mr. Cotton Mather to be F. R. S. returned in time for prayers. This was a very large convention of the Society; I met with good old Dr. Sl. . . .¹ and other ancient acquaintance, and never saw so great a number of the Fellows together, three rooms almost filled; Dr. Tancred Robinson and I sat on the same chair.²

Of course this entry left no doubt in my mind that the Royal Society balloted on the name of Cotton Mather on the 11th of April, 1723, in the afternoon. The startling thing was the date, — almost ten years later than the letter from Waller quoted by Samuel Mather. It remained to consult the records of the Society, which, it was to be hoped, would clear up the mystery. Professor Ernest W. Brown, of Yale University, himself an F. R. S., was so kind as to forward my queries to the proper quarter, and the response was prompt and satisfactory. I have a letter³ from Robert Harrison, Esq., Assistant Secretary and Librarian, containing the following extract from the MS. Journal of the Society for April 11, 1723:

Dr. Woodward informed the President that Dr. Cotton Mather of New England was recommended many years ago to the Society for a Fellow, and had also upon a reference to the Council past their approbation in order to be ballotted for in the Society, which was never yet done, he therefore desired that the said gentleman might be now ballotted for, which being granted, Dr. Cotton Mather was elected a Fellow.

Mather's appeal to Jurin, we observe, had been effectually answered before it was written. It bears date May 21, 1723, and the Society

¹ Sir Hans Sloane.

² The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F. R. S., ed. Hunter, 1830, ii. 366. Thoresby himself was admitted into the Royal Society in 1701. He notes the ceremonies which we have already heard of in this discussion: — "This being the first time I was at London since my admission into the Royal Society, I subscribed my name in the book; the formality of the Vice-President's taking me by the hand and publicly pronouncing me (in the name of the Society) a Fellow of the Royal Society, . . . may be seen in my Diary" (i. 339-340).

³ November 16, 1911.

had already acted, at the instance of Woodward, on the 11th of April. The inquiry provoked by the pugnacious Checkley had operated in a way its originator little expected. Woodward, we remember, had written to Mather, and Mather had replied.¹ Investigation of the Society's records had doubtless followed, and the awkward blunder of ten years before had come to light. For this blunder Mather was obviously not responsible. It was Waller, if anybody, who was to blame; for he had certainly informed Mather that he had been elected in 1713 both by the Council and by the body of Fellows. The Council's vote was correctly entered in the Minutes, but no record could be found of Mather's election by the Society. Perhaps there had been an informality in the balloting; perhaps there was an omission in the record. Waller, who had nominated Mather, and who, as Secretary, should have entered his election (if it took place) in the Journal,² had been dead for several years.³ There was only one way to set things right, — to abide by the face of the record, to assume that no ballot had been taken by the Society in 1713, and to proceed to such a ballot at this late day. Woodward stated the facts, in open meeting, to the President, Sir Isaac Newton, and asked for a ballot. And so, at last, Cotton Mather was duly elected a Fellow of the Royal Society on the 11th of April, 1723. It was still impossible for him to fulfil the technical condition of attending a meeting within four weeks, signing the obligation, receiving the right-hand of fellowship, and thus undergoing the ceremony of admission. But all this, in his case, was clearly regarded as of no immediate consequence. It is ridiculous to imagine that the Society elected him, under these exceptional circumstances, with the intention that his election should

¹ See pp. 101-102, above.

² The Statutes provide that "the Election and Admission of every person into the Society, with the time thereof, shall be recorded in the Journal-book" (Chap. vi., sect. 7, p. 83).

³ I have not found the date of Richard Waller's death. Thoresby paid him a call on August 14, 1714 (Diary, ii. 251), and says nothing about his being in poor health. Weld gives November 30, 1714, as the date when he ceased to be Secretary (History of the Royal Society, ii. 561). Dr. Woodward, on April 3, 1721, speaks of his death as if it were not recent (1 Massachusetts Historical Proceedings, xiii. 111). A passage in a letter from Mather to Dr. Woodward, July, 1716 (M. H. S.), mentions "our dear Mr. Waller" in a way which, taken in connection with the rest of the letter, makes me think that he is referring to him as a departed friend.

become void in a month, — before he could be informed 'of it, indeed! We must suppose that the statutory proviso ("or within such further time, as shall be granted by the Society or the Council, upon cause shewed to either of them") was meant to go into effect in his case; and meantime, we may be sure, the Society expected him to annex the F. R. S. to his name. Otherwise, their action is unintelligible.

Less than four years later, on January 9, 1727, a new section was added to the Statute, in order to provide for just such cases of persons living at a distance:

Every person, who is a foreigner, and every one of his Majesty's subjects, whose habitation or usual place of residence is at more than forty miles distance from London, shall be and be deemed a Fellow of the Society, immediately after he shall be elected, and shall be registered in the Journal-book of the Society as such: Provided always, that no such person shall have liberty to vote at any Election or meeting of the Society, before he shall be qualified pursuant to the Statutes. And if he shall neglect so to qualify himself, the first time he comes to London, when he may be present at a meeting of the Society, and can be admitted; his Election shall be declared void, and his name shall be cancelled in the Register.¹

This section was, I suppose, not retroactive, and it has therefore no legal significance in the case of Cotton Mather, except perhaps to indicate that, in spite of his election, he was never, in the full technical sense of the term, a Fellow of the Royal Society. One thing, however, must now be clear, — that the Society did its utmost to make him a Fellow, and that, from 1723 until his death, he was an *F. R. S. elect*, lacking only the formality of a ceremonial admission. And the lack of this ceremony, we should remember, did not, according to the practice of the Society, deprive Americans of the right to be styled and to style themselves Fellows of the Royal Society — as we have seen already in the case of Paul Dudley.²

Thoresby's account of the meeting at which Mather was finally elected is particularly interesting. It was, he tells us, "a very large convention of the Society." He "never saw so great a number of the Fellows together." The assembly was so crowded that he and Dr.

¹ *Diplomata et Statuta*, 1752, pp. 83-84.

² See p. 96, above.

Tancred Robinson had to "sit on the same chair."¹ Now it was well known to the meeting that Cotton Mather had been erroneously describing himself as an F. R. S. for nine years past. Their action, therefore, in electing him on this occasion is more eloquent than words. They were not offended at what he had done. They perceived that he had acted under an innocent — indeed, an unavoidable — misapprehension, and, in this large meeting, they corrected the error of their deceased Secretary and rehabilitated Mather in a way not less honorable to themselves than to him. Few men have ever received a more striking and brilliant vindication. John Checkley was in England at the time.² I trust he got early news of the occurrence.

It may seem to many persons, as it did to Dr. Slafter, "a matter of very little importance whether Dr. Mather was, or was not, a Fellow of the Royal Society."³ But it certainly *is* of some consequence to know whether he was, or was not, a shameless impostor. It *is* of some consequence to know that, in using the letters F. R. S. from 1714 to 1723, he was acting in good faith and in a way that received the emphatic endorsement of the Society. And it is at least very pleasant to feel sure that when, after the vote of April 11, 1723, he appended this title to his name (as he did, for example, in *Successive Generations* in 1725, and in the inscription under Peter Pelham's mezzotint likeness of him in 1727) he was proceeding in the strictest accordance with the desire and purpose of the Royal Society itself, as expressed in the plainest manner at a very large meeting of that august body.

How or when Mather was informed of his final election we do not know, — doubtless in an official notice from the Secretary, Dr. Jurin, and perhaps also in a private letter from Dr. Woodward. His replies would be good reading if we had them. His correspondence with

¹ The reason for so large an attendance was doubtless the election of a Librarian and Keeper of the Museum in place of Alban Thomas. Thoresby refers to the meeting again in a letter to Richard Richardson, M. D., June 21, 1723 (printed by Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, i. 810): — "I never saw such a number of the Fellows as upon that occasion; three rooms almost full." He mentions the fact that there were "many candidates put in for [Thomas's] place."

² See p. 106 note 3, above.

³ John Checkley, i. 40.

the Society continued. On August 3, 1723, he gave John Perkins, his family physician, a letter of introduction to Jurin.¹ In the early autumn of 1724 he despatched a set of "*Curiosa Americana* continued. In a Decad of Letters to D^r John Woodward and D^r James Jurin."² On October 5, 1724, he wrote a letter to Jurin introducing Howard Wyborn,³ and on the 15th of the following December a letter introducing Zabdiel Boylston.⁴ No later communications are preserved, if any were ever sent. The letter of October 5 is especially interesting, for it expresses, in its opening sentences, the satisfaction that Mather felt in the action of the Society in perfecting his title and his sense of gratitude to Jurin himself. I shall quote the passage in full, as a fit conclusion to our study of Cotton Mather's Election into the Royal Society:

You have so encouraged me, by the kind Reception, which my former communications have had with you, and by your Means with my Illustrious Masters, that I cannot but in my poor way, continue them. I wish that they had been more valuable for Curiosity or Erudition. But they are what I have. And you will have the Goodness to consider me, as a man exceeding full of employments: Able but now & then after a Mean Manner to express my zeal for your Noble Design. 'Tis indeed nothing but that well-meaning Zeal, that can bespeak for me, the Room you are pleas'd to allow me in a SOCIETY which I esteem as one of the most Illustrious in the World.

¹ Royal Society Letter-Book, M. 2. 45 (Gay MS., fols. 211-213).

² Letter-Book, M. 2. 46-55 (Gay MS., fols. 213-253). The letters are dated October 1, and September 21-26, 28-30, 1724 (the year being omitted in the last). The letter of September 21 concerns the *Amphisbæna* of Newbury (see p. 107, above). That of September 23 describes the storm and high tide of February 24, 1723-4, and has been printed in 4 Massachusetts Historical Collections, viii. 456-457. Draughts of all these ten letters, except that on the storm, are in M. H. S.

³ Letter-Book, M. 2. 56 (Gay MS., fols. 253-256).

⁴ Letter-Book, M. 2. 57 (Gay MS., fols. 256-259).

*With the author's
compliments*

COTTON MATHER'S ELECTION
INTO THE ROYAL SOCIETY

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